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Sisters of Reparatrice

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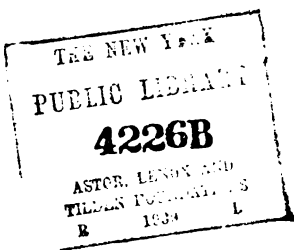
SISTERS OF REPARATRICE

By
LUCIA GRAY ^{or} SWETT

BOSTON
LEE AND SHEPARD

1902

DRS



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Contents

	PAGE
Sisters of Reparatrice	7
✓ The Old Brocade	18
The Two Songs	23
The Exeter Elms	26
A Tyrolean Song	29
The Girl of Other Days	31
A Regret	34
Like Bright Lamps	35
✓ Easter	37
To E. D. C.	38
To Francesca	39
To Marguerite	40
✓ Our Cups of Tea	41

WON 19 FEB '36

Sisters of Reparatrice

THE order of Adoration Reparatrice was established in Lyons about 1845, and in Paris in 1848.

There are many branches of this order, and many communities of the same name independent of each other. One of the convents of Les Sœurs Reparatrices exists in Genoa, and Donadio, the celebrated prima donna, has for several years been a sister in this convent.

Sisters of Reparatrice

SWEET those psalms we heard them
singing

In that far land long ago;
And they in my mem'ry linger
With an echo clear and low.

What the words were, that I know not,
But they told of rest and peace ;
And your Sisters sang like angels,
Order of Reparatrice.

Off the Via Assarotti,
In the narrow, winding street,
Stands the convent, with its chapel ;
There the past and present meet.

In the midst of all the wonders
Of that city grand and old,
Now as ever, "La Superba,"
Whilst its palaces can hold

Safe from time their priceless treasures
Where Art reigns her works among,
And receives unceasing homage
From the never-ending throng.

Artists, students, pleasure-seekers,
Tourists wand'ring book in hand,
Come to marvel at her beauty,
Drawn to her from ev'ry land.

Leaving Via Garibaldi,
With its palaces and shade,
Soon a flood of sunshine meets us,
And the strains of music played

In the Park of Aquasola.
Up the hill, as we draw near,
Comes the sound of children's laughter
Ringing merrily and clear.

There the groups of Balie resting,
Like great beds of tulips gleam ;
Soldiers idle, peasants linger,
Life seems all one happy dream.

But down leading to the harbor
Where the great ships, resting, wait,
Ever coming, ever going,
With their passengers and freight,

Through the dark and crowded byways
The same story we read o'er,
Drawn in lines of want and trouble
In the faces of the poor ;

See the bands of men and women
Passing on with weary tread,
Trusting in the New World's plenty
To find work and homes and bread.

But these things the Sisters heed not,
This vain pride and fleeting joy ;
Have they not renounced forever,
Buried deep each earthly toy ?

What to them are sordid worries ?
They have laid them all to rest,
With life's labor but half ended
Ere the sun has reached the west.

Often would I watch one sitting
In her peaceful, quiet nook,
With her calm face pale and thoughtful,
Bending o'er some pious book.

Once she lifted it, half smiling,
And she looked so young and fair
That I wondered with vague pity
What strange fate had called her there.

Had death robbed her of her dear ones ?
Had she lost a lover true ?
What sad secrets were there hidden
Underneath that veil of blue ?

Then perchance she'd cease from reading,
Close awhile the saintly page,
Come a moment on the terrace,
Like a bird from out its cage,

Pause an instant in the sunlight.
Were there ever nuns so gay ! —
Of this world they'd kept a little
Just to brighten up their way.

Snowy robe with band of azure
'Neath which peeped her shoes of white,
Whilst o'er all the blue veil floated,
Of some texture soft and light.

And from out that cloud celestial,
As though gazing from the skies,
Once I saw her looking toward me
With her wondrous Southern eyes.

She might leave all worldly follies,
Pomps and vanities forget,
But her eyes had not consented
And their splendor lingered yet.

Early on those autumn mornings,
Almost at the break of day,
From the convent rose the anthems
Floating o'er the narrow way.

One among the many voices,
Sweeter, higher yet would soar,
And we said, "'Tis Donadio;
Hark, she sings as ne'er before."

Yes, it was the Donadio.
Often had we heard her name,
How she'd turned from many a triumph,
Left applause, success, and fame,

All the glamor of the foot-lights,
Dazzling stage and brilliant halls,
For the shadow and the silence
Of the sombre convent walls.

Did the vision try to lure her,
Make her life seem hard and cold ?
Or could no regret assail her
As her beads she softly told ?

Ere the angel choir claimed it
She her voice to heaven gave,
And no soul too far could wander
For that voice to win and save.

Are those sacred notes beginning,
Does the organ softly swell ?
Is the gentle nun yet dwelling
In her lonely little cell,

With the endless reparation
Of her holy order still,
Ever reading, singing, praying,
In the convent on the hill ?

When I look out o'er the city,
Hear its rush and roar and strife,
See the crowds in one wild hurry
As though all too short were life,

Then I close my eyes and listen,
While all care and trouble cease
As again I hear your voices,
Sisters of Reparatrice.

The Old Brocade

[Worn at the ball which was given in Salem for General Washington in 1789. The old brocade is now in the Essex Institute.]

SHAKE out its every fold,
For a story each may hold,
That we can faintly guess, but never know,
And their rustle is a chime
Of that far-off goodly time,
The valor and the grace of long ago.

There's a softness in its hue,
That belongs to nothing new,
A sad and dreamy perfume of the past,
From each sunset that has fled,
All the roses bloomed and shed,
Since Grandmamma so proudly wore it last.

At the ball in Salem town,
When its beauty and renown
Were gathered, the great Washington to
meet ;

Many cheeks and eyes grew bright,
For its fair dames held that night
The hero's stately homage at their feet.

If could vanish many a year
And Great-Grandmother were here,
Could we watch her at the ball come and go,
In this gown of pink brocade
That could rival in its shade
The flowers in the wax-lights' magic glow.

Her dark eyes and handsome face
With each soft curl in its place,
The huge fan in the dainty mitted hand ;

I can seem to see them now.
Ah, the General's splendid bow !
And her courtesy was ev'ry bit as grand.

There were courtly speeches fine,
Toasts were drunk in sparkling wine,
And happily the moments onward sped.
Reels and contra-dances gay
Made the hours glide away,
And then a stately minuet they'd tread.

Those were days when one must learn
Well a compliment to turn,
But Great-Grandmother knew them all, I
 ween ;
To the wondrous things were said
She would smile and nod her head
And never lose her dignity serene.

Yet I think of words more dear
She could never know nor hear,
Whose music is forever sweet and new ;
And from out the long past years,
Faint and far, through mists of tears,
Come Great-Grandfather's simple words
and true :

She had been his winter's sun,
Since their journey had begun,
With her he'd known not one unhappy
day ;
She had been his summer's shade,
And when she to rest was laid
The gladness from the earth had passed
away.

And when finished is life's task
What better would one ask ?
For after all, what sweeter words could be,
Than that one we love and know,
Should we be the first to go,
Might say the very same of you or me ?

The Two Songs

I SAID I will never sing again,
My toil and labor have been in vain ;
Should I strive without one thought of rest
Yet I could not hope to reach the best,

And I know that then my voice would be
In the great, grand chain of harmony
A silver thread which would ne'er be
missed,
To which the world could not care to list.

But a little child climbed on my knee
And said, " Will you sing a song to me ?
A song of the sea and lighthouse gray
Where the children lived who used to play

"With castles they built of sand and shells,
Who heard in the night the magic bells ;
Of the fairy with the jewelled boat
Who took them over the waves to float

"To that far isle with birds and flowers,
Like none we see in this world of ours ;
I beg you to sing it all to me."
And so I sang, while he laughed with glee.

"Why should I keep on singing," I said,
"When the happy hours are past and fled,
Those hours whose glory we sought to hold,
Which sped away on their wings of gold.

"And now from that time so bright and glad
There comes but an echo faint and sad,
And naught is left of each joyous day
Save the sound of music far away."

But an old man said, " Long, long ago
I heard a song which perchance you know;
It gave one courage and strength and cheer,
It made one feel that heaven was near.

" If steep and hard the way up the hill,
The sunset view would be fairer still,
And every star that shone above
Was an angel's face aglow with love.

" And brightest among the shining host
Were those who on earth had suffered
 most ;
Ah, only to hear it all once more ! "
And I sang the song he loved of yore.

The Exeter Elms

WE stretch our sheltering branches,
Green-leaved or white with snow,
And guard the old town's pleasant streets
Where students come and go.

Yes, we can watch them at their games,
Can hear their voices ring,
Till the whole world seems full of joy,
And life glad, endless Spring.

Yet when the happy day is done
Perchance some lad may come,
Who, wandering in the twilight,
Will dream of friends and home.

And in the moonlight oft we hear
The songs and laughter gay
From a band of youths and maidens
Who wend their merry way.

Still the new boyish faces pass —
We greet them year by year,
And still must say once more farewell,
To part with hope and fear.

For we know each one's ambition,
His purpose, and his aim,
And many a peril's hidden
In paths that lead to fame.

But sometimes on the winter wind
Or summer breezes light
Are borne the names of those who've won,
Who've fought a goodly fight.

For they fought with faith and courage,
Nor laid their weapons down,
But struggled onward ever
To gain the laurel crown.

We can tell each one who's fallen,
Each one who's reached the goal,
And often on a summer's night
We softly call the roll.

But from many comes no answer,
To break the silence deep;
They rest from all their labors here,
Their watch no longer keep.

A Tyrolean Song

I WROTE a little love-song
Upon a Summer's day,
And set it to a glad air
With a rhythm bright and gay.
There was not a thought of sorrow,
No sad note in its tune,
For we sang it in the Tyrol,
One joyous day in June.

But soon the blue sky clouded,
My love's eyes lost their light,
The wind our song enfolded
And bore far out of sight ;



Long we sought for it together,
But hunted all in vain,
Then I said, "What does it matter!
I'll write it o'er again."

And sometimes in the twilight,
When I am all alone,
The melody I'm sure of,
But yet the words are gone;
And if I think I've found the words
Then will the tune go wrong;
'Tis never quite the same again,
My happy little song.

The Girl of Other Days

THEY say she was a bit too shy —
Too quiet were her ways,
And yet I miss, I scarce know why,
The girl of other days.

The courtesy and gentle thought
For all, a gracious care,
That ever sunshine with them brought
And made life's dark days fair.

Her faith was ever clear and strong,
Nor courage did she lack,
But right was right, and wrong was wrong,
She knew no middle track.

No Puritan from out the past,
Whose conscience never slept,
E'er held ideas more firm and fast
How Sunday should be kept.

How often I have watched her stand
Upon a Sabbath morn,
Her hymn-book in her little hand,
Her pretty gown of lawn,

The neatly folded India shawl,
The bonnet edged with lace, —
A something sacred over all
Reflected from her face !

And never mind if long or dull
The sermon chanced to be,
That calm, sweet face was ever full
Of eloquence to me.

She held aloft the glowing light
Of purity and love,
A beacon through earth's darkest night,
A guide to heaven above.

And this is why, all-loyal yet,
My heart her tribute pays,
And why I never can forget
The girl of other days.

A Regret

WE each and all have some regret,
Some loving look that meets us yet,
The clasp of little fingers,
Dark eyes that are forever bright,
And in whose depths the same soft light
For us still fondly lingers.

The sunny smile that ne'er grows cold,
Fair hair that does not lose its gold,
For time can change it never;
And in my heart I do believe
The rose she wore that summer eve
Is fresh and sweet as ever.

Like Bright Lamps

LIKE bright lamps forever burning,
Whose blest light can never wane,
Shining clearly, shining softly,
Through the darkest nights of pain;

Like loved flowers we have gathered
When the way seemed rough and hard,
Never fading, ever fragrant,
That the leaves of mem'ry guard;

Are the kindly deeds that failed not
When our courage all had fled,
And the loving words that met us
When our very faith seemed dead.

Words of love with cheer and comfort,
Guiding all the way along,
Growing ever sweeter, clearer,
Till our hearts repeat the song.

"Love on, trust on," they are chiming,
"Trust on, love on," still they say,
Echoes from that land of promise,
Where all tears are wiped away.

Easter

JOYOUS children with glad voices,
As they carols sing to-day,
Seem to hear the angels' anthem,
Almost see the golden way.

But for souls with sorrow laden
There's a song no glad heart hears,
Easter's blest, most wondrous glory
Shines for eyes that look through tears.

To E. D. C.

LIGHT of a noble mind that ever
Shines clear and strong across life's
sea,

Who shall tell how many an endeavor
Was guided by some thought of thee,

To help the suffering and weary,
To lift the fallen and oppressed,
And bring to heavy hearts and dreary
Glad rays of courage bright and blest!

To Francesca

PEACE and joy, beloved Francesca,
Ev'ry mercy crown this day.
Thy own heart reflect the sunshine
Shed about thee on thy way.

And as thou art nobly using
Those great gifts bestowed on thee,
Gladdening this world of sorrow,
Heaven grows more fair to see.

For the angels paint in glory
Pictures, that the saints above
May know all thy deeds of kindness
And thy patient works of love.

To Marguerite

WHEN I look across the blue sea
Where the clouds and ocean meet,
There's one song the waves sing to me,
Chanting ever, *Marguerite*.

When the wintry blast is crying,
Or the summer wind is sweet,
Loudly calling, softly sighing,
Still 'tis ever, *Marguerite*.

Our Cups of Tea

MY dear, I think of days to come
When we will have the sweetest
home.

We'll dress in gowns of silv'ry gray,
With knots of ribbon, oh, so gay !
Of pink and blue, in caps of lace,
On curls that nod about each face,
Our muslin kerchiefs wondrous fine,
With pins of pearls in quaint design,
And bright old ladies we will be,
And gossip o'er our cups of tea.

Just bits of news and pleasant things —
How we've heard rustle Cupid's wings,

About the new ring Marjie wore,
And will the rector wed once more ?
To what a beauty Helen's grown,
And how Jack wants her for his own ;
And that the stork will by and by
In at our neighbor's window fly,
And we the christening must see,
All this to season up our tea.

A work of art each cup and plate
Of rarest Sèvres of ancient date,
The snowy biscuits piled in mounds,
And spicy pound-cakes, hearts, and rounds,
With fragrant tea and richest cream,
They'll say each cup is just a dream,
There'll be good cheer and welcome glad,
And none can long feel tired or sad,
For care will fade and trouble flee,
As hearts grow merry o'er their tea.

And we must have a garden too,
With cherries many, quinces few,
Old-fashioned flowers bright and fair,
And roses ! roses ev'rywhere.
The best of all, our loved white rose,
An arbor where sweetbrier grows.
There often on a summer's day
Our little maid will bring the tray,
Then ev'ry bird will sing for glee
And make us happy at our tea.

In winter, by the fire alone,
We'll talk of all the friends who're gone ;
The dear Italian friend we knew,
So sympathetic, fond, and true,
With genial smile and kindly eyes,
Clear as the heaven 'neath which she lies,
Far, far from all this land of snow.
I wonder will she ever know

How much she was to you and me,
And how we miss her at our tea !

Sweet Dorothy and Margaret,
Their joyous laugh, I hear it yet,
They come with footsteps quick and light,
Just as of yore, in frocks of white.
We move to make for them a place,
And stoop to kiss each sunny face,
But smile, yet wipe away a tear,
For they've been married many a year,
And little dream how often we
Still miss them o'er our cups of tea.

"Why, Ralph !" He's surely standing
there,
A sunbeam's on his golden hair,
"You'll have to stoop to pass that door," —
Our house ne'er seemed so small before.

Old friend with gen'rous heart and hand,
And tales to tell of ev'ry land,
Of prairie fires, brave scouts and guides,
Of tiger hunts and midnight rides ;
The better would his story be
The stronger was his cup of tea.

We'll hear them all once more, but no !
He went to China long ago,
Drinks better tea than I can brew.
My love, you might have been there too,
Been dwelling in that magic land,
Had countless servants at command,
Rich silks and ivories, fans of gold,
More jewels than your hands could hold.
Perchance you stayed for love of me ;
Ah, take another cup of tea !

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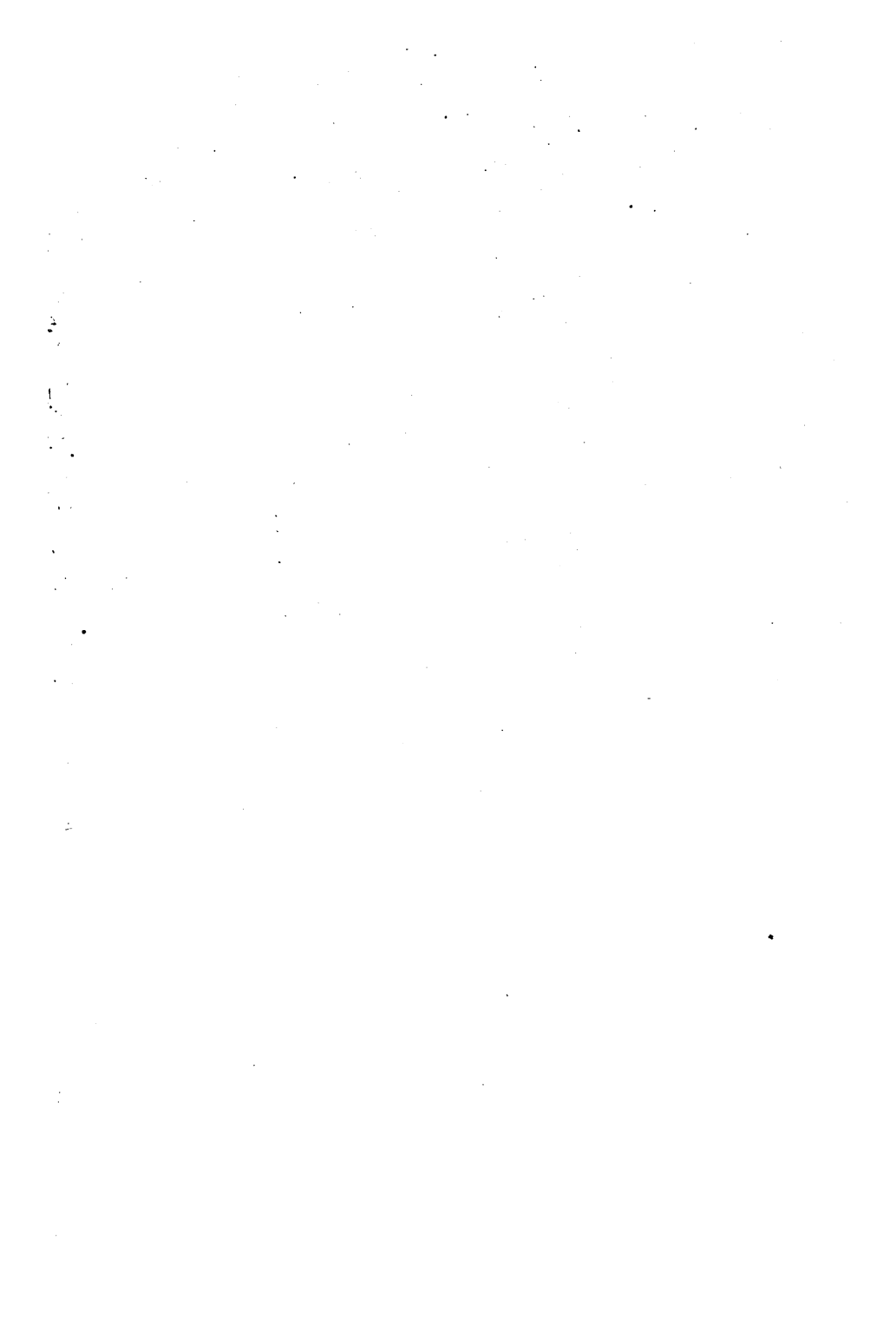
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